

**THE MINUTES OF THE
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2004**

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *Belmont Fire Stations Estimated Project Budget as of 2/24/04*

Members absent: W. Hofmann

Also present: Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, School Director of Finance & Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, Capital Budget Committee, Fire Station Building Committee, Fire Station Architect Brett Donham, and Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:42 PM.

Fire Station Building Committee

Chairman Widmer explained for this part of the meeting, it would be a joint meeting with the Capital Budget Committee.

Mr. McLaughlin (Fire Station Committee Chair) reminded the Committees of the funds voted on at Town Meeting. He updated the Committee on the progress since Town Meeting. Mr. Donham (of the architectural firm Donham & Sweeney) gave a presentation regarding the proposed fire station headquarters and substation buildings. Headquarters will be a five bay station. It will house the Fire Prevention and Administration offices. The Substation building is a three bay station. The MBTA bus stop will remain on Alexander Avenue. There will be a basement under the building due to the change in elevation from the front of the building to the back.

The project total is estimated at \$13,130,000, with \$1,700,000 previously appropriated. The net amount needed is \$11,430,000. (*See Handout 1*)

Construction Cost	\$8,430,000
Site Costs	\$1,600,000
Other Costs	\$2,250,000
Project Contingency	<u>\$850,000</u>
Total Costs	\$13,130,000

Within the next 2-3 years, the full eight bays will utilized by equipment. Capital Budget Committee Chair Mike Speidel spoke of the Clafflin Street parking problem that is even greater with the Substation going there. Chairman Widmer would like the before and after amount of parking spaces in Belmont Center available to the Committee.

Mr. Speidel is concerned with the parking problems in Belmont Center. He would rather this parking issue be checked and explored before the construction is done. Member McCormick suggested putting a second deck on the Substation parking lot, filling the need for more parking spaces.

The project split is roughly 40% Substation and 60% Headquarters. With site acquisition, Mr. Donham thinks it is closer to a 35/65 split. Mr. Donham says that doing one project without the other will increase costs in the long run.

Member Curtis believes that Belmont Center parking is an issue for the entire Town center and does not need to be fully resolved before starting the Fire Stations. Member Schafer asked for an overview of scheduling if the debt exclusion passed in April. Mr. Donham said the buildings, as one project, would go to bid in September, due in October. One of the projects would move along 2-3 weeks ahead of the other. It should be about a 16-month total construction period, bringing the completion to January 2006.

Capital Budget Committee Member Clark asked if this budget includes a Project Director. Mr. McLaughlin responded it includes a Clerk of the Works, but not a Project Director. Mr. Donham added these would be straightforward building projects.

Some of the differences between the originally projected project costs of \$12 million are an 8% increase in costs from when it was first introduced and additional clean up costs.

Mr. McLaughlin noted the amount to be voted on for April's Town Meeting would be \$1.5 million less due to funds previously appropriated. Member Oates added these figures do not include any proceeds from the sale of the current buildings.

Member Callanan is concerned with the Substation activity and noise for the neighborhood. Mr. McLaughlin reviewed different considerations taken such as: headlights, lighting fixtures, the mechanical system will be enclosed on the roof, siren use would be minimized, creating a little park area, landscaping, and other things to minimize noise and activity levels.

Treasurer Freiner plans on paying equal principal because it is the maximum of 20 years. The average single-family impact will be \$134. Treasurer Freiner remembers the high was just under \$200, with the low around \$90.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and with 16 members present, the Warrant Committee voted to recommend approval of the plan as presented tonight to do both stations simultaneously, to finance both over a 20-year period.*
- *Chairman Widmer, Selectman Brownsberger, and Members Curtis, Schafer, Stratford, Oates, Heigham, Fitzgerald, Tillotson, Callanan, Hobbs, Kobus, Brusch, and White **approved** said motion.*
- *Member McCormick **abstained** from said motion.*

Member McCormick would like to see the information on the two projects broken down by building. Selectman Brownsberger mentioned the Board of Selectmen has agreed this would be a joint project.

Member Schafer asked about the anticipated staffing level considered for the fire station project. Asst. Chief Frizzell answered the assumption is level staffing, with the possibilities of adding beds to the bedrooms. We are planning for what we have for staffing today. Joint Public Safety Communications is currently planned to stay at the Police Department. Member Oates also mentioned that separate quarters for males and females are included in these plans.

Other

Chairman Widmer reminded the Committee the public budget night is Tuesday, March 16 at the Chenery Middle School at 7:30 PM. This Saturday, 2/28, is the Schools Budget meeting at the Town Hall Selectmen's Board Room at 9 AM.

Town Administrator Kleckner spoke of a worksheet with the revenues/expenses with the issues that have been raised during the meetings. The Board of Selectmen identified their individual priorities. These priorities are not final decisions. Selectman Brownsberger said it was a very preliminary conversation, and it was agreed nothing was definite. Member Stratford added the School Committee also had a similar discussion, and he will provide a working draft at the School Budget meeting on Saturday morning. Vice Chairman White reminded Town Administrator Kleckner of a staffing summary he requested a few weeks ago. Town Administrator Kleckner said he would work on this. Selectman Brownsberger mentioned the Board of Selectmen asked for expected attrition through this calendar year. Vice Chairman White also asked Member Stratford to the same staffing exercise from the School Department as well.

Subcommittee Report

Department of Public Works, Community Development, and Building Services

Member Curtis was very impressed with the managers in Public Works and Community Development. They are very organized in their thinking and are logical about what they do.

DPW Director Castanino thinks he can provide an acceptable level of service in FY05. The net difference in staffing is -1 from FY04 to FY05. The reorganization of the Public Works department is still a work in progress. Mr. Castanino believes we have gained efficiencies because of the consolidation. He is reducing the sidewalk budget by \$50K, and some shrub trimming would be reduced.

Community Development

Director Gatzunis is very capable of running this department. If McLean and O'Neill properties move forward in FY05, he would need more staff. The fees derived from the permits would offset the additional staff. It is time for Town to produce a new atlas (\$10K), which would be able to go online for use by residents. The atlas is not in the budget now, but the last time it was produced was in 1998. Mr. Gatzunis would like \$1K for two PDA's, which would save about one working hour per day. One capital request is a GIS system, but that cost would also require additional personnel costs of a person trained to use the system.

Building Services

Some specific issues are: utility costs for the Annex, the Town Hall has a costly and antiquated steam heating system, and the need for a front line supervisor. Mr. Looney feels the custodians would be more effectively deployed with a front line supervisor. Mr. Looney feels his role is more a financial/accounting/auditing role. The Town Hall Annex is updating their phone system, and that project would fall under his department. There is also talk of a passkey system for the Town's personnel.

Policy Stuff

The Subcommittee suggested creating an awareness of tangible donations given to the Town and the maintenance and sustenance of such donations for the future. An example of this would be flowers donated to a delta, and the DPW having to fund the planting and watering costs. Another possible policy is for Building Services to be consolidated into someplace else. It is something to think about having a person managing the process of major capital projects, i.e., new phone system or a new building. The high level responsibilities the current manager of Building Services could be absorbed into their position, leaving the daily maintenance of buildings out there without supervision. It may be able to go with Public Works or the School Department.

Town Administrator Kleckner has set the area of Buildings in his goals for this year. He feels there is a lot of potential for consolidating School and Town in this area. It would have to be staffed by one of the Town's larger departments.

Chairman Widmer summed up this collection of comments is really important. Member Brush would like the Library considered with the Building Services issue as well. Selectman Brownsberger suggested there are structural and personnel issues here. The Board of Selectmen will discuss this further before the end of this fiscal year, but it would not affect the FY05 Budget.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk